

Lyrick Enters Midline World With Newly Inherited 'Kipper'

'KIPPER' KICKOFF: The home video debut of Nickelodeon's *Kipper* series will mark Lyrick Studios' first foray into budget-priced product.

On June 5, Lyrick will release the 60-minute *Kipper: Pools, Parks and Picnics* and *Kipper: Tiger Tales*, priced at \$9.99 apiece. Each video—about the adventures of a curious hound and his animal friends—will contain seven episodes from the series, which is based on popular books by British author/illustrator **Mick Inkpen**. The books have sold 6 million copies worldwide, according to Lyrick.

Although Lyrick normally prices new releases at \$12.95 or more, Lyrick VP of sales **Debbie Ries** says the lower price point will ensure that *Kipper* is placed at supermarket checkout lanes and other retail spots that inspire impulse buying.

In addition, several *Kipper* videos that had been previously released by Hallmark Home Entertainment carried a \$9.99 price point, and several large accounts had already placed new titles into their marketing plans at that price. Lyrick inherited the line when it was acquired by *Kipper* producer HIT Entertainment. "One of the two titles we're releasing is in the mass merchants' plan-o-grams," Ries says. "We didn't want to be side by side with different price points."

Catalog titles will be updated with new packaging and added programming per video, Ries says.

The new *Kipper* titles will be cross-trailered on Lyrick's *A to Z*

With *Barney*, which streets May 8. Priced at \$16.95, the double-cassette package of *A to Z With Barney* comes with \$3 worth of Luvs Diapers coupons and two eight-minute *Kipper* episodes as a bonus. Trailers for the new *Kipper* titles are also planned for *Bob the Builder*, *The Wiggles Dance Party*, and *Barney's Musical Castle*. *Kipper* will also be supported by print ads in *Nick Jr.* magazine and on the Nick Jr. Web site.

According to Ries, licensed product and other *Kipper* merchandise will be launched during second-quarter 2002 to coincide with the next wave of new video product. "We merged with HIT Entertainment in March, and they also have *Bob the Builder* and *Angelina Ballerina*, so we obviously didn't have time for a huge launch," Ries says. "We'll do that in 2002, when there's new *Kipper* shows, apparel, plush, etc."

Lyrick is preparing the release of the *Angelina Ballerina* video series for retail by teasing one title, *The Rose Fairy Princess*, as an exclusive offer in the *American Girls* doll catalog, Ries says. "When more episodes are produced, then we'll go to retail."

PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE: The acclaimed animated children's TV programs *Little Bill*, based on **Bill Cosby's** picture books, and *Dora the Explorer* will make their video debut June 5 from Paramount Home Entertainment. Both shows air during Nickelodeon's Nick Jr. preschool programming block.

Each video is priced at \$12.95



by Moira McCormick

and has a running time of 50 minutes. Initial titles are *Big Little Bill*, *Me and My Family*, and, in the *Dora* series, *Wish Upon a Star* and *Swing Into Action*. Each video also contains a free activity book. For the *Dora* titles, one activity is a free E-card that can be accessed through the Nick Jr. Web site.

Paramount is supporting the titles with network and cable TV advertising on Nickelodeon and Nick Jr. and other networks, as well as in print publications, including *People*, *Women's Day*, *InStyle*, *TV Guide*, and *Family Circle*.

Also upcoming from Paramount and Nick Jr. is the first full-length direct-to-video title from the *Little Bear* franchise, *Maurice Sendak's the Little Bear Movie*. The 76-minute movie is priced at \$19.95 and is set for an Aug. 7 release. A new *Blue's Clues* title, *Blue's Clues: Playtime With Periwinkle*, is due in stores May 1, priced at \$9.95.

"*Blue's Clues* and *Rugrats* are mature franchises, [and] while *Little Bear* has been out there, it's still growing," Paramount spokesman **Martin Blythe** says. "But with *Little Bill* and *Dora the Explorer*, here are two new franchises that

will keep the Nick Jr. brand fresh."

Paramount will also try to tap the wide audience for *Little Bill* and *Dora*, which feature African-American and Latino leads, respectively.

"Both series have demonstrated their universal appeal," Blythe says. "They'll probably grow in popularity as video franchises in much the same way that *Blue's Clues* and *Little Bear* have grown."

SEEING SPOTS: Walt Disney Home Video has launched an

instant-win game connected to its just-released *102 Dalmatians*.

The grand prize includes an opportunity to be drawn as a character in the upcoming direct-to-video *101 Dalmatians: The Animated Sequel* and a trip to southern California. One specially marked *102 Dalmatians* videocassette and one DVD will determine the winners. Contestants can also enter by mailing their name and address to Disney.

102 Dalmatians is on sale for \$24.99 on VHS and \$29.99 on DVD.

Billboard

APRIL 28, 2001

Top Kid Video™

COMPILED FROM A NATIONAL SAMPLE OF RETAIL STORE SALES REPORTS.				Year of Release	Suggested List Price
THIS WEEK	2 WKS. AGO	WKS. ON CHART	TITLE Label, Distributing Label, Catalog Number		
			No. 1		
1	1	4	LADY AND THE TRAMP II: SCAMP'S ADVENTURE Walt Disney Home Video/Buena Vista Home Entertainment 21226	2001	26.99
2	7	2	MARY-KATE & ASHLEY: WINNING LONDON Dualstar Video/Warner Home Video 37332	2001	19.96
3	10	2	RUGRATS IN PARIS: THE MOVIE Nickelodeon Video/Paramount Home Video 336723	2000	24.95
4	20	2	VEGGIE TALES: LYLE, THE KINDLY VIKING Big Idea/Lyrick Studios 2137	2001	12.99
5	6	11	MARY-KATE & ASHLEY: OUR LIPS ARE SEALED Dualstar Video/Warner Home Video 37236	2000	19.96
6	4	11	FANTASIA 2000 Walt Disney Home Video/Buena Vista Home Entertainment 20859	1999	26.99
7	2	8	THE ROAD TO EL DORADO DreamWorks Home Entertainment 83669	2000	24.99
8	12	19	MARY-KATE & ASHLEY: SCHOOLDANCE PARTY Dualstar Video/Warner Home Video 56501	2000	14.95
9	3	11	POKEMON: THE MOVIE 2000 Warner Home Video 18620	2000	22.96
10	5	18	BUZZ LIGHTYEAR OF STAR COMMAND: THE ADVENTURE BEGINS Walt Disney Home Video/Buena Vista Home Entertainment 19751	2000	24.99
11	8	5	DIGIMON: THE MOVIE FoxVideo 2001138	2001	19.98
12	NEW		THE POWERPUFF GIRLS: BOOGIE FIGHTS Warner Home Video 1724	2001	14.95
13	NEW		THE POWERPUFF GIRLS: TWISTED SISTER Warner Home Video 1729	2001	14.95
14	11	40	INCREDIBLE ADVENTURES OF WALLACE & GROMIT BBC Video/Warner Home Video 1510	1996	19.98
15	22	15	THE LITTLE MERMAID II: RETURN TO THE SEA Walt Disney Home Video/Buena Vista Home Entertainment 19680	2000	26.99
16	13	6	BATMAN BEYOND: RETURN OF THE JOKER Warner Home Video 18173	2000	19.96
17	18	3	SCOOBY-DOO AND THE GHOUL SCHOOL Warner Home Video 1700	2001	14.95
18	21	19	MARY-KATE & ASHLEY: GREATEST PARTIES Dualstar Video/Warner Home Video 56520	2000	14.95
19	16	11	THE POWERPUFF GIRLS: BIRTHDAY BASH Warner Home Video 1658	2000	14.95
20	14	7	VEGGIE TALES: ESTHER, THE GIRL WHO BECAME QUEEN Big Idea/Lyrick Studios 2139	2001	12.99
21	24	26	MARY-KATE & ASHLEY: SWITCHING GOALS Dualstar Video/Warner Home Video 36859	2000	19.96
22	15	10	SAILOR MOON: THE LEGEND BEGINS DIC Entertainment/A.D.V. Films 707303	2000	12.98
23	NEW		POWER RANGERS: THE QUEEN'S WRATH FoxVideo 2001369	2001	14.98
24	9	18	VEGGIE TALES: KING GEORGE AND THE DUCKY Big Idea/Lyrick Studios 2136	2000	12.99
25	19	17	THE TIGGER MOVIE Walt Disney Home Video/Buena Vista Home Entertainment 19946	2000	24.99

• IRMA gold certification for a minimum of 125,000 units or a dollar volume of \$9 million at retail for theatrically released programs, or of at least 25,000 units and \$1 million at suggested retail for nontheatrical titles. • IRMA platinum certification for a minimum of 250,000 units or a dollar volume of \$18 million at retail for theatrically released programs, and of at least 50,000 units and \$2 million at suggested retail for nontheatrical titles. © 2001, Billboard/BPI Communications.

'LEFT BEHIND' PUTS CLOUD TEN AHEAD

(Continued from page 69)

"So many people have read one or more of the books that the demand for seeing it on the screen was a natural," says Nashville-based LifeWay Christian Stores book buyer David McGee. "*Left Behind* is in a class by itself, selling 10 times more than other videos in our stores."

Cloud Ten built sales of *Left Behind* by translating the best-selling book series into a quality production and by working closely with retailers. "Working with retailers has been key," Jones says. "We're very open and say, 'OK, what do we need to do?'"

For example, Cloud Ten couldn't afford a national TV advertising campaign for the title but offered retailers an in-store terminal for customers to view clips of the film. Jones says stores that took the kiosk saw sales soar five times over.

Jones says the film's religious message is presented differently than in other similar product, making the film more appealing to customers. "Other videos are often preachers talking. It's just talk,

talk, talk. What we've done is put it into live action. That's why people love it."

Another factor leading to the success of *Left Behind* was break-



ing the title beyond the Christian retail market. Cloud Ten secured distribution not only in mainstream video stores but in mass merchant accounts.

Tower Video VP John Thrasher, who manages inventory for the chain's 99 U.S. stores, credits the overall success of the product to wide distribution. "It's no easy task getting into a lot of distribution channels," he notes, "and Cloud Ten has gotten into distribution in a big way."

Jones says the sales volume at Christian outlets is four times larger than at mainstream retail. Still, *Left Behind* sells well for online retailers, as well as Wal-Mart, Target, and Sam's Club.

"*Left Behind* is an interesting mix of Stephen King and Robert Ludlum, with a Christian apocalyptic theme," Amazon's Englehart adds. "It sounds like a goofy concept, but it makes for a fun action/thriller."

Last month, Cloud Ten followed up *Left Behind* with *Judgment*, from its "Apocalypse" series, and is watching it climb the charts. After five weeks on the Top Video Sales chart, the title is No. 23. A sequel to *Left Behind*, called *Tribulation Force*, is slated for a fall 2002 release.

Retailers say Bible-based action films could be the next big trend. Tower's Thrasher says, "A number of our suburban locations have done very well, and we're pleased that independent filmmakers are exploring faith issues—it's really good for the marketplace."